

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 896

CE 046 027

TITLE Tri-County High School. An Alternative.
INSTITUTION Tri-County High School, Clarksburg, WV.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling Techniques; Curriculum; *Dropout Prevention; *Dropout Programs; Evaluation Criteria; High Schools; Individualized Education Programs; *Individualized Instruction; *Nontraditional Education; Parent Participation; *Potential Dropouts; Program Content; Referral; Student Evaluation; Student Placement; *Vocational Education

IDENTIFIERS Job Training Partnership Act 1982

ABSTRACT

Tri-County High School in Clarksburg, West Virginia, uses a nontraditional approach to educating actual and potential dropouts from schools in surrounding areas. The primary objective of the program is to enable students to develop adaptive behaviors and adequate skills to return to the regular classroom. The initial screening for admission into the program is done by designated home school personnel and includes assessment of Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) qualifications, prior School Based Assistant Team Referrals, and previous home school efforts. While participating in the Tri-County program, students not only receive individual help in English, reading, math, science, and social studies, but also complete units of study in occupational survival skills and vocational training at the adjacent United Career Center. Students are periodically considered for reassignment to their home schools or may be referred to any of a number of other programs, such as preparation for the General Educational Development test, vocational training, or work force or job placement. This program guide includes the following: a program overview; statement of program philosophy and goals; description of target students; guidelines for initial screening, determining JTPA eligibility, referring students, developing contracts and individual education plans, encouraging parent/guardian involvement, reassigning or dismissing students, and providing counseling; and a description of the curriculum. Assorted forms are appended. (MN)

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TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

AN ALTERNATIVE

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Research shows that four factors facilitate the process of dropping out: alienation, social class position, dropout reinforcement, and internal blame. Failure, alienation, indifference, and lack of support are problems that can no longer be ignored. They breed only ignorance and perpetuate themselves in succeeding generations. Young people leave school because there is something missing. Many dropouts report that they would have stayed in school if they had been given an alternative--another way of doing things that was flexible enough to accommodate their need to learn in non-traditional ways. Because public schools must serve large numbers of students, they have not had the capability to address effectively the needs of those students whose learning styles are incompatible with existing programs. It is for these students that Tri-County High School (TCHS), a regional comprehensive alternative center, has been developed.

Tri-County High School is a progressive, cooperative effort supported by the Doddridge, Harrison and Taylor County school systems. Located adjacent to the United Career Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, TCHS is an innovative program which offers an individualized, unique curriculum for potential dropout students in grades nine through twelve.

The target student for TCHS is the average or slightly lower-than-average child who is not succeeding in the traditional classroom mold. This school is an alternative, a program with new choices for the potential dropout candidate. Offered is a fresh approach to education by a highly-trained, specialized staff. Incorporating the most progressive ideas in education, these instructors will deliver an individualized course of study in a personalized, supportive atmosphere.

Although TCHS will attempt to meet the needs of all potential dropouts, the program is not geared to address the problems of the severely handicapped population. Special education programming has provisions for this purpose.

Initially, screening for admission into TCHS is done by designated home-school personnel (principals, guidance counselors, teachers and other appropriate personnel). This screening procedure addresses, but is not limited to, such areas as Job Training Partnership ACT (JTPA) qualifications, prior School Based Assistant Team (SBAT) referrals, previous home school efforts, and other criteria outlined in this program description.

Additional screening is done by the TCHS Team for Alternative Placement (TAP), which reviews the documented data received from the home school.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW (CONT.)

Each student is admitted contingent upon a parent/guardian/student contract. This basic contract is the central idea upon which the first stage of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is based. Each student is accepted for a probationary period of six weeks.

While attending TCHS, a student not only will receive individual help in English, reading, math, science and social studies, but he/she will also complete units of study in occupational survival skills. Selected students will be enrolled in vocational training at United Career Center, which is adjacent to TCHS.

While the main purpose of TCHS is to enable students to develop adaptive behaviors and adequate skills to return to the regular classroom, there will be students for whom this will not occur. Because of age, grade level or student's goals, a student may remain at TCHS or transfer to other programs such as:

- A) preparation for General Educational Development test (GED)
- B) vocational training
- C) work force placement (including armed services)
- D) job placement (Job Tryout, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation On-The-Job Training)

Students will be considered for reassignment to their home high schools or dismissal by the TCHS instructional team composed of subject area teachers and guidance counselor. Considerations for reassignment or dismissal can be initiated by parental request, recommendation of the instructional team, or student request with parental approval.

In conclusion, the challenge to the educational system has been issued. A famous folk poet once said, "I'm going to change my way of thinking; I'm going to change my point of view." Tri-County High School has been designed to meet this challenge by offering a new direction and point of view. It is a school where communication is the primary focus; where purpose, not form, is the important element; where processing problems is equally important as, if not more important than, the delivery of information; and finally, where all students are valued.

For information about the alternative program, please contact Robert Loretta, Principal, Tri-County High School, Route 3, Box 43-C, Clarksburg, West Virginia 26301.
Telephone number - (304) 624-3290

PHILOSOPHY

Encouraging the fullest development of each person's potential for a happy, productive life is the essential purpose of the public schools. The fulfillment of this purpose enriches the individual's life and benefits society as a whole.

In order to achieve this goal, educational systems must adapt to the needs of each individual.

The main purpose of alternative education is to offer educational choices which will encourage the development to those individuals whose educational needs are not met by the traditional programs. It is, therefore, the responsibility of educators to understand and employ program designs, methods of instruction, and materials which provide the student with the best choices and educational experiences possible. It is the responsibility of the student to avail him/herself of these special opportunities and to seek his/her highest level of achievement. Throughout the process, the educator must encourage the student to believe in him/herself in order that he/she may grow toward fulfillment of his/her potential.

This alternative program addresses those students who are identified as potential dropouts from school. It is designed to allow the latitude of operations by educators to permit students to function at their own level, to experience success, and to generate sufficient self-esteem to prevent their dropping out of the school system.

PROGRAM GOALS

The Tri-County High School program is designed to assist students in

1. remaining in school, thereby reducing the dropout rate
2. improving the achievement levels in language arts, social studies, math and science
3. decreasing absences compared to previous attendance records in conventional classrooms
4. demonstrating an improvement in self-concept by experiencing success in social and academic endeavors
5. demonstrating an improved level of peer functioning
6. reducing pressures within a more personalized atmosphere
7. eliminating or substantially reducing academic failure
8. preparing for readmission into the regular school setting
9. qualifying for a high school diploma
10. developing identified adult role characteristics

The program will assist the students in making improvement in the above areas by

1. providing opportunities for pre-vocational and vocational experience through course work at the United Career Center
2. providing Personal Education Plans (PEP's) according to students' identified strengths and weaknesses
3. offering parents and students counseling which should enable them to deal more effectively with individual problems
4. encouraging parental involvement and commitment
5. providing opportunities for career exploration, planning, and advising in areas including but not limited to armed services, skilled trades, and careers requiring college education
6. preparing students with pre-employment skills, work maturity skills, and basic education skills

TARGET STUDENTS

Research shows that a decision to drop out of school is the result of the following specific causal factors developing over a period of time in a context that includes the school, family and community. These four causal factors are

1. Alienation - Alienation is a psychological state, the main characteristic of which is a feeling of powerlessness.
2. Social Class - Social class position is the status of a distinct group in relationship to other groups.
3. Dropout Reinforcement - Dropout reinforcement refers to patterns of social relationship through which motives, attitudes, rationalization and aspirations can be transmitted and reinforced.
4. Internal Blame - Students in the context of school life attribute their failure to personal inadequacy.

In light of these causal factors, students comprising the target group for Tri-County High School exhibit specific characteristics. Students are male and female potential dropouts from Doddridge, Harrison and Taylor counties. They attend grades nine through twelve in a public secondary school. Students will be considered for placement if they qualify under the guidelines of Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program and if they display characteristics of a potential dropout:

1. a history of out-of-school suspensions
2. a profile of behavior that results in frequent conflicts with other students or school staff
3. behaviors which persistently interfere with their own learning or with the educational process of others
4. a need for attention and help beyond that which the basic instructional program can provide
5. unsatisfactory academic progress and rejection of efforts to provide assistance
6. two or more years older than classmates
7. one or more years behind in grade level
8. an I.Q. of 90 or below

TARGET STUDENTS (CONT.)

9. grade deficiencies (D's or F's) in two or more subjects in this or previous years
10. a definite disinterest in school work; for example, not doing homework, expressing a dislike for school, not offering to respond in class
11. reading deficiency of two or more years below grade level
12. parents/guardians who exhibit indifferent/negative attitudes toward school performance
13. negative feelings toward school; for example, indicating they have no friends, believing teachers are not fair, not wishing to participate in school activities
14. non-participation in out-of-school activities; for example, Boy Scouts, 4-H, church groups, summer sports programs
15. chronic absenteeism; for example, 20 or more days absent per year
16. students' perception that they are not liked or accepted by other students/have no personal friends
17. frequent absences caused by ill health or excessive fatiguing while in school

PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL SCREENING

Screening for admission into Tri-County High School will be done by designated home school personnel (principals, guidance counselors, teachers and other appropriate personnel) any time during the school year, using the following instruments/ procedures:

- A. qualification under Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
- B. identifying appropriate dropout characteristics as defined on previous page(s)
- C. review of grades
- D. attendance records (minimum of 20 days' absence)
- E. standardized test scores
- F. behavior reports
- G. documented strategies that have been used by the staff of the regular instructional program in an attempt to alleviate the problem
 - 1) schedule modification
 - 2) School Based Assistance Team (SBAT)
 - 3) discipline strategies
 - 4) counseling
- H. interview with the student to determine interest in program
- I. recommendation of principals, guidance counselors, teachers
- J. presentation of above data to Team for Alternative Placement (TAP)

JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT (JTPA) ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is determined exclusively by appointed personnel at the West Virginia Department of Employment Security (job service). Eligibility is based essentially on an economic guideline that is pre-established by the state and revised on a regular basis. It is a measure of total family income over a six-month period immediately preceding application for services under JTPA programs. Parents/guardians must complete an application form and submit it with verification of address, income, social security number, age, family size or other data as may be appropriate to the local job service.

In the event that a student is not eligible for JTPA for economic reasons, there is a small percentage of allowable verifications for students who may exhibit traits which are considered barriers to successful employment.

GUIDELINES FOR REFERRING STUDENTS

- 1) Referrals may be initiated by a teacher, guidance counselor or principal. The principal must ultimately refer the student for placement into Tri-County High School.
- 2) The principal shall submit to the Team for Alternative Placement (TAP) a written referral form with all supporting documents attached. The TAP team shall be composed of the instructional staff and guidance counselor of Tri-County High School.
- 3) A referral's acceptance or non-acceptance into the school shall be made in accordance with the selection criteria and space availability.
- 4) A decision on placement shall be made within ten (10) working days from receipt of a referral and all documentation/information.
- 5) The student and parent shall sign a contract prior to being admitted to Tri-County High School.

THE CONTRACT AND PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN

The parent/guardian and the student participate in an entrance procedure designed to clarify the student's purpose in Tri-County High School and to establish agreement and commitment among the student, parents, and school staff for the responsibilities of each. This basic contract is the central idea upon which the first stage of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is based. The contract is established prior to entry into the Tri-County High School. The student is accepted for a six-week probationary period.

Individual academic test results and behavioral observations are then incorporated into the writing of the student's PEP in order to determine the student's functioning levels in academics, vocational or career education, and social development. It may thereafter be adjusted at meetings of the instructional team.

The instructional team is comprised of the subject area teachers and the guidance counselor. Team meetings are held for the purpose of reviewing each student's progress. Goals, objectives, and activities are revised in response to the individual's growth.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT
AS PROVIDED BY TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

1. Hold parent/guardian conferences to discuss the program and to answer any concerns that the parents may have.
2. Provide all parents/guardians with information packets or leaflets explaining the program.
3. Establish parent/guardian visitation dates.
4. Develop a consistent system of home contact for absences, discipline problems, positive feedback and academic progress.

GUIDELINES FOR REASSIGNMENT

Students will be considered for reassignment to regular school setting by the instructional team upon:

- A) parental request
- B) student request and parental request
- C) recommendation of Tri-County High School's instructional team

The Tri-County High School's instructional team will consider the following criteria as a basis for reassignment to regular school setting:

- A) significant improvement in academics as measured by testing
- B) improved self-concept, self-acceptance and understanding of self
- C) significant progress toward vocational/career goal
- D) reduced disruptive behavior (better social adjustment)
- E) improved attendance

In the majority of cases, reassignment will be made at the beginning of a semester grading period. However, in those instances where the best interest of the student can be met by earlier placement, a mutual agreement between the home high school principal and the Tri-County High School principal can be negotiated.

GUIDELINES FOR DISMISSAL

The Tri-County High School (TCHS) instructional team will review the records of students being considered for dismissal. A recommendation accompanied by written documentation will be forwarded to the TCHS principal for final determination. If the TCHS principal's decision is for dismissal, pertinent records and notification will be sent to home high school principals and parents/guardians.

Dismissal from TCHS will automatically constitute a student's reassignment to home high school's jurisdiction.

Students will be considered for dismissal by the instructional team upon:

- A) failure to display any effort during the probationary period
- B) repeated violations of behavioral rules
- C) failure to attend class on a regular basis
- D) the judgment of the instructional team that the alternative setting is no longer in the best interest of the student
- E) realization that all other options have been exhausted in efforts to gain positive response from the student (i.e. counseling, tutoring, parent conferences)
- F) possession, usage, selling and distribution of any illegal drugs/alcohol/ paraphenalia
- G) possession of weapons
- H) assault or battery of faculty

*Possible reassignment or dismissal of any identified special education student will be administered through a Placement Advisory Committee (PAC). All state and federal regulations and guidelines will be adhered to in accordance with PL 94-142.

COUNSELING

Guidance and counseling services are provided in both individual and group settings. Through the counseling program, the students are assisted in the development of:

- A) good attendance habits
- B) reduction in disruptive behavior
- C) enhanced self-concept
- D) interest in school
- E) teacher, family and peer relations
- F) greater awareness of opportunities for vocational training, college education and employment
- G) improved academic achievement
- H) wise decision-making skills
- I) an understanding of test score interpretations
- J) increased knowledge of academic requirements for graduation

Since the counseling needs of students may vary greatly, a referral relationship is maintained with community health and other professional service agencies.

CURRICULUM

A. Academic

The academic courses are mostly ninth- and tenth-grade English, math, science, and social studies, although eleventh- and twelfth-grade courses in the major areas are also offered when necessary. With focus on literacy, reading skills will be emphasized in all academic content areas. The individualized curriculum provides for students to be screened and tested to determine the types and levels of materials which will best suit their needs. Teachers design individual courses of study, with attention given to general state-wide curriculum descriptions of course objectives, the student's personal levels of academic skills and the individual's educational goals.

B. Vocational

Screening for vocational classes is provided, and students are placed into programs based upon students' interests, testing, and openings available.

C. Social Adjustment

Social skills training in individual responsibility, problem solving, communication skills and group social interaction are provided.

D. Resource Period

Of special interest in our curriculum is the resource period, which provides individualized remediation in English, math, science, and social studies. All of our students are scheduled for daily self-paced work in the resource period in one or more areas of deficiency. Upon entry into Tri-County High School, all students are evaluated with appropriate tests, the results of which are used to provide a remedial prescription in areas of deficiency.

E. Career Education

This academic offering is designed to provide students with extensive instruction in job seeking/job keeping skills in preparation for entry into employment. Included in this area are pre-employment skills, work maturity skills and vocational exploration.

TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

REFERRAL FORM

Name of Student: _____ Soc. Sec. #: _____
 Date of Birth: _____ Grade _____
 Name of School: _____ Referral Source: _____
 Date of Referral: _____

Potential dropout students exhibit specific behaviors and can be described as follows. Please check those behaviors that apply to the student you are referring.

Non-Involved	_____	Disruptive	_____
Defensive	_____	Withdrawn	_____
Irresponsible	_____	Aggressive	_____
Poor Self-Image	_____	Unmotivated	_____
Truant	_____	Failing Academically	_____
		In Need of Improved	_____
		Social Skills	_____
Other	_____		

Previous School Data: From _____ to _____

Number of disciplinary actions taken by home school's administration: _____

Types: _____

Suspensions (No./days): _____ Reasons: _____

I.S.S. (No./days): _____ Reasons: _____

Unexcused absences: _____

Excused absences: _____

Subjects and grades: (attach a copy of Permanent Record Card and Report Card)

Standardized Test Scores: (Permanent Record Card)

REFERRAL FORM

- 2 -

1. Has this student ever been retained? Yes _____ Grade(s) _____ No _____
2. Has this student ever been referred/tested for Special Services?
- Yes _____ No _____
3. If yes, give details including dates: _____

Specify any known health problems: _____

Specify any community agencies, physicians, etc. involved: _____

Other comments (if any):

REFERRAL FORM

- 3 -

Strategies that have been used by the staff in an attempt to alleviate the student's problem.

Recommendation of principal, guidance counselor, teacher.

Student selection will be prioritized according to student needs balanced by consideration for those students who display the maximum potential for success in Tri-County High School.

Thank you for completing this form. Our prompt attention will be given to this referral.

S. Robert Loretta, Principal
Tri-County High School

TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM
TEACHER OBSERVATION FORM
Referral School

Student: _____

Grade : _____

Teacher: _____

Subject: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: The above named student is a candidate for alternative education. Please comment on (A) Grades, (B) Attendance, (C) Needs, (D) Interests, (E) Behavior, (F) Talents.

Please return this form to _____ by _____

Observations and Comments:

(A) Grades (current semester)

(B) Attendance (current semester)

(C, D, E, F) Needs, interests, behavior, talents (use back if necessary)

Signature: _____

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Date: _____

TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTRACT

As parent(s)/guardian(s) of _____, I/we acknowledge that my/our child has been selected for placement in the Tri-County High School's alternative program. I/we understand that he/she will be assigned a Personal Education Plan (PEP). I/we hereby pledge my/our support for this program and agree to the following:

1. to ensure my/our sons's/daughter's consistent attendance while he/she is enrolled at Tri-County High School (TCHS).
2. to call the school on any occasion that my/our son/daughter will be absent from class
3. to notify the school in writing prior to the time my/our son/daughter must leave school early for any reason
4. to send a written confirmation to a school official the next school day in the case of an emergency which required my/our son/daughter to be allowed to leave school without prior written approval
5. to come to the school within forty-eight (48) hours after being called by the principal for a conference
6. to remove my/our son/daughter from school in the case that he/she has been suspended for a specified period of time when notified by the principal
7. to work cooperatively with the staff of TCHS in their efforts to meet my/our son's/daughter's needs

Dated this _____ day of _____, 19____

Parent/Guardian _____

Parent Guardian _____

Principal _____

TRI-COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT CONTRACT

Student _____

Date _____

Grade _____

I, _____ agree to follow all the rules and regulations that have been prescribed by Tri-County High School (TCHS). I certify that I have read and understand the attached Harrison County Discipline Policy and TCHS Discipline Policy.

I understand that I am being admitted for a six-week probationary period.

I understand that I will be continually evaluated and can be placed on probation at any time.

I understand that attendance at TCHS is mandatory and that excessive absences can result in dismissal.

I agree to remain drug- and alcohol-free so that my mind will be clear and maximum effort can be made toward success.

I acknowledge that if I do not follow the rules and regulations of TCHS and do not make sufficient academic progress, I can be dismissed from this school, which may be my last opportunity to receive a high school education.

Furthermore, I will attempt to develop adequate skills and adaptive behaviors that will allow the instructional team of TCHS to return me to my home school program in accordance with reassignment procedures.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 19____

Student _____

Parent/Guardian _____ (if student is under 18 yrs. of age)

Principal _____

Attachment 1 Harrison County High School Discipline Policy

Attachment 2 Tri-County High School Discipline Policy

Attachments 1 and 2 are student's personal copies. Initials certify receipt.

Initials _____

TRANSFER FORM

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